

Teens and ADHD Drug Abuse

The number of teens abusing ADHD drugs is on the rise. Many use the drugs to get euphoric feelings and exaggerated self-confidence.

By Karen Perry



Is ADHD medication abuse the newest teen/young adult drug problem?

That's an issue NOPE Task Force and many other anti-drug advocates are closely following after a series of news accounts pointed out failures in the medical system to keep powerful ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) drugs from being misused by youths.

Here's how a recent *New York Times* article summarized this:

“Medications like Adderall can markedly improve the lives of children and others with the disorder. But the tunnel-like focus the medicines provide has led growing numbers of teenagers and young adults to fake symptoms to obtain steady prescriptions for highly addictive medications that carry serious psychological dangers. These efforts are facilitated by a segment of doctors who skip established diagnostic procedures, renew prescriptions reflexively and spend too little time with patients to accurately monitor side effects.

“...Savvy college graduates, freed of parental oversight, can legally and easily obtain stimulant prescriptions from obliging doctors.”

This article told the story of an athletic, personable, and aspiring medical student who committed suicide after misusing Adderall, an amphetamine-based medication for ADHD. (Link to article: <http://ht.ly/i9c7u>)

Young adults are among the fastest-growing segment of people taking ADHD medication. In all, some five million Americans take medication for ADHD.

Misusing these drugs can be dangerous, and many hospitals are reporting a surge in emergency room visits for ADHD medication. Between 2005 and 2010, one study found that ADHD medication-related emergency room visits have more than doubled — from 13,379 in 2005 to 31,244 in 2010.

There are many signs when youth people are abusing ADHD drugs.

Like all drugs, watch for significant changes in appearance, attitude, or behavior, according to medical information website, Clinical Advisor. Youths abusing ADHD drugs may develop a smoking habit and use alcohol regularly. They may show interest in different clothing and music that emphasize drug use.

Also, keep an eye out for a pattern in which youths want more ADHD medicine. This can be disguised by a comment such as: “I feel better when I take my medicine more often.”

Symptoms of stimulant substance abuse include: behavioral changes; problems in school, failure to complete homework; changes in friends and activities; long periods of sleeplessness or not eating; and unusual behaviors, such as secrecy, and unexplained spending of money.

To prevent the potential for abusing ADHD drugs, parents and guardians need to control access to prescription stimulants. They need to keep current pharmaceuticals in locked containers, clean out the medicine cabinet regularly, and safely discard old prescriptions.

Let’s all be vigilant on ADHD drug abuse. We’ll keep you updated on this important issue.

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